

5 KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL RELOCATION



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INTRODUCTION

It's a familiar story when meeting a new family in town or at church--yes, they're new to the area. Like all the others, they have recently arrived from Seattle, Portland, or somewhere in California. The reasons may vary but they all have a common theme. Covid lockdowns, vaccine mandates, violent protests, crime and drug problems, oppressive government. The universal refrain is "it just feels so good to be somewhere normal."

The last few years revealed significant divides in our country. While residents of some areas were locked in their homes and trying to avoid protests, those in other regions carried on with their lives largely undisturbed. With such a contrast, it's no surprise that relocation is top of mind for many.

This is only the most recent chapter in a longer story. For the past decade, a steady stream of people have been moving away from the big cities to regions that offer greater security, long-term sustainability, a better cultural fit, and a brighter future.

Beyond the current media hype about World War III, we still face an uncertain future, with real potential for a second great depression, hyperinflation, political and social sanctions on "undesirables," increasing social unrest, and further disruptions to supply chains and infrastructure.

Considering all this, examine a few key questions concerning your current property and location:

- Is your home and community adequately secure?
- How are your area's culture and politics affecting you and your family?
- Does your situation offer a good upbringing and future for

your children a grandchildren?

- Could your community withstand a significant disruption to the national supply chain and infrastructure?
- Are you at obvious risk of harm in a natural disaster or societal breakdown?

On the other hand, it's also good to take stock of what you have and will have to give up if you leave. Leaving might mean leaving a community of like-minded families, a solid church, good educational resources, nearby friends or relatives, or job and career opportunities. Don't just assume these will be better or easier to find elsewhere.

While it's not an easy choice, it's an important one. Tragic stories of populations forced to relocate by political or economic forces have reoccurred throughout history. For many, the best choice will be to "get out while the getting is good" rather than waiting until external circumstances force the issue. My ancestors were lucky enough to leave Missouri in the 1850s and settle in California before the outbreak of the Civil War. My parents moved to the American Redoubt a few generations later, leaving California's oppressive government and moral decay behind.

In light of the current situation, it may well be time for you to consider the possibilities of your own family's relocation.

KEY #1

Security

Naturally, most people start by thinking about what they want to avoid. The first step is to pick a location that reduces the direct risk of disaster and isolates you from the secondary effects of societal breakdown.

Disaster Risk

Relocation can significantly reduce your disaster risk, but no region is risk-free. As part of your relocation, take note of the local risk factors, and update your preparedness plans for your new location.

Earthquake risk is heavily concentrated in tectonic fault areas and can be considered a certainty over a multigenerational timespan. Crucial areas to be aware of are the length of the West Coast and the New Madrid Fault zone of the central US.

Tornado risk is highest in the south and midwest. Appropriate planning and architecture can significantly mitigate this risk. Consider ICF, masonry, or similar highly durable construction methods if you choose a location in this region.

The most significant risks of flooding, storm surge, and wind damage due to hurricanes are concentrated on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. However, considerable flooding risk exists nationwide, even in otherwise arid climates. Consult FEMA's flood maps for guidance, and avoid low-lying locations that will be at greater risk. Wildfire is a risk in rural areas, especially in hilly and timbered terrain. No matter where you make a home, planning for fire mitigation must be part of your agenda.

Make a plan for creating defensible space around your home,

Relocation can significantly reduce your disaster risk, but no region is risk-free.

establishing fire breaks between your property and adjoining land, and ensuring that you have multiple evacuation routes.

Nuclear or chemical events could take several forms, whether singular terrorist attacks or a full-scale nuclear exchange with a major foreign power. In any case, it would entail the release of radioactive material near one or more major cities or military targets across the US. While the apparent risk of a total “mutually assured destruction” exchange has diminished in the current environment, avoiding locations immediately downwind of top-tier targets is wise.



Population Density

Beyond the direct effects of a disaster, population density is the critical factor in the impact of second-order effects. As a rule, fewer people means fewer problems in troubled times, while highly populated cities will be at risk for a cascading breakdown of all essential services. Areas close to large population centers

are more likely to experience large numbers of refugees, social unrest, or looting in the event of disaster.

A satellite image of the United States at night is a straightforward illustration of this concept, and provides a very close analogue to census [results](#). The majority of America's population is east of the Mississippi River and highly urbanized. The population density of the United States is dramatically lower west of the Mississippi River. Even in the Western states, Americans live in a highly urbanized society. Roughly ninety percent of the population is crammed into five percent of the land area, primarily within fifty miles of the coasts.

When deciding where to relocate, you can start by evaluating what regions will be sites of violence in the worst-case scenario and what areas may be overlooked or out of the way. Accordingly, look for lightly populated rural areas well removed from major population centers.

Secondly, if conditions in major cities deteriorate, you can also expect an outflowing of hungry and desperate refugees to surrounding rural areas. Consider the most likely routes this exodus could take, and choose a location away from these channels. Consider the average person's assumptions. Select a location that is not a prime tourist destination or an obvious agricultural area close to a major city.

You're looking for a property with a level of privacy, not directly on a main road. Aim to be "out of sight, out of mind" and avoid being an easy target. At the same time, keep in mind the limitations. A remote location typically means less access to the amenities and support of civilization and makes it harder to get help in an emergency.

Remote Versus In-Town

Determining your level of remoteness and self-sufficiency is essential to your long-term success. It's common for those leaving

the city to seek independence in a location as remote and isolated as possible. The desire to forge a living away from civilization is part of our cultural mythos. But bear in mind the fact that those self-reliant pioneers lived lives of great privation and hardship. Many chose the frontier because the next best alternative was working in a factory or living in a slum.

Consider the potential levels of relocation along these lines:

- Remain in your current location
- Choose a more sustainable or secure home in your current region
- Migrate to a town or small city that offers a better outlook
- Relocate to a remote rural location

Don't base your decisions on an idealized picture of rural life. Trying to build your own self-contained infrastructure from scratch is a massive challenge. It's entirely possible attempting total self-sufficiency in a very isolated area will lead to personal or financial ruin. For many, perhaps even most, the best survival opportunity may be a quiet residential or rural neighborhood in a well-chosen community with a close-knit family or church network.



KEY #2

Sustainability

Select an area with self-sustaining agriculture and industry, which is conducive to establishing your own self-sufficiency

Beyond avoiding the direct effects of a disaster or social breakdown, you can select an area with self-sustaining agriculture and industry, which is conducive to establishing your own self-sufficiency. While living at extreme latitudes or in a very harsh climate means you'll be left alone, your long-term survival may be at risk without outside commerce and infrastructure.

Water

Civilizations have historically been built around safe sources of water. Today, most Americans don't stop to think about the complexity and fragility of the infrastructure that delivers a constant supply of clean water at the turn of the tap. For residents of major cities, the only water source is a civic water supply pumped from deep aquifers, treated and distributed with electric pumps and computer control.

As a factor in choosing your destination, ensure you select an area that provides sufficient water for household and agricultural use. Avoid arid regions where water is only accessed from deep aquifers or piped from distant reservoirs. Choose an area with moderate rainfall and readily available ground and surface water. Remember, you can improvise almost anything except water!

Food

Food production and distribution are critical when choosing a long-term relocation destination. As a rule, look for areas with productive agriculture, a good growing season, and a diverse mix of crops and livestock. In many places, traditional multi-crop farms have been replaced with intensive monocultures. In other areas, agriculture depends heavily on water supplied from vast distances away. Look for areas still conducive to diverse

traditional farming techniques, which will be able to adapt despite disruptions to infrastructure.

Likewise, food distribution takes place worldwide, dependent on a global shipping, rail, and trucking system. Today, we assume that the same variety of food will be available in stores any week of the year. Historically, food preservation was a year-long project to put away enough food to survive through the winter and spring. Very few areas are truly self-sufficient in their food production, so having your own food storage is always important. A comprehensive preparedness approach will include ongoing food production, preservation, and a well-stocked pantry. At a minimum, look for an area not too far from areas with significant grain, hay, and livestock production.

Economy and Industry

The survival of a family or community over multiple generations depends on their ability to be productive over the long term. While moving to the utter wilderness may put you away from the problems of civilization, it's only a temporary measure if it's not sustainable for the next generation. Look for a region with a moderate positive growth rate. A rapidly expanding area will likely go bust at some point and may be hit harder by an economic downturn.

Additionally, look for a community in a state with a positive attitude towards business, without excessive regulation or heavy taxes. Look for a community demonstrating overall economic health or ongoing growth versus an economically depressed area. A nationwide downturn may hit these areas even harder. Look for communities strengthened by strong social cohesion and family-friendly culture. In hard times, they are more apt to pull together to maintain order and security.

KEY #3

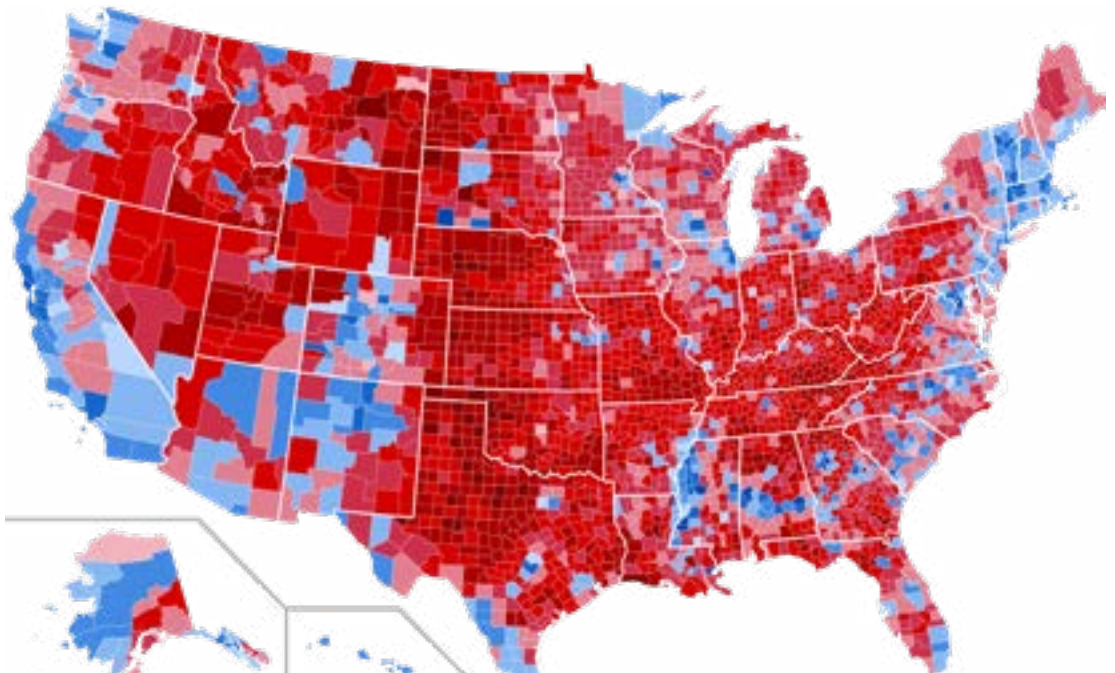
Politics & Culture

Politics

Select a destination in an area where the principles of liberty are respected at state, county, and civic levels

History shows that the greatest threat to a population is often its own government. Centrally engineered famines, state-sponsored mass murder, and the forced migrations of entire peoples have demonstrated this hard truth repeatedly. As such, I encourage selecting a destination where the principles of liberty are respected at state, county, and civic levels. Avoid living under a controlling “nanny-state” government. As time goes on, these are probably going to get worse.

The included map of 2020 election results at a county level provides a helpful overview. (An interactive map of 2016 precinct level results can be found at [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com).) At a basic level, look for a county that matches your political outlook, in a similarly colored state.



Being in a clearly aligned area, rather than a battleground, goes a long way towards keeping you out of the way of future political violence. Although it is hard to predict future political developments, it's essential to make a choice that offers the potential for your outlook to hold out or improve through the coming years.

Community

Mankind was made for community, and as a rule, robust communities survive. A lone household is likely to rely on just one or two sources of income, a single property's security, and a few members' health. If any of these factors are compromised, that household's long-term survival will be at risk.

At the core, a community is built from a collection of solid households. Given all other considerations in choosing an area for relocation, a stable community and strong connections with friends and family go a long way. Give a heavy weight to personal relationships in selecting your destination. This might mean an area where you have extended family living already, or returning to the region your family has roots. Or it might be choosing a location with a social or religious community that you are closely aligned with. Pre-existing bonds can play a major role in helping you get established and thrive in a new home.

If you have friends or family that have already relocated to a suitable area, consider joining them, even over picking an otherwise more ideal retreat area. Getting established in a community takes years or decades, and having someone that's gone ahead and started this process is a great asset. You will have an inside perspective on the area, a developing tie to the community, and the opportunity for mutual support.

If you are religious, it is essential to consider where you might find a community to fit into. Choosing a community with a congregation in your denomination will provide ready-made connections and a home for worship. This may mean choosing a less-than-ideal location simply in order to be close to a like-minded community.

Personal Factors

Your Personal Situation

There's no ideal destination that is best for everyone. For some, a suburban or semi-rural home in a safer region may be a better choice than a truly remote property. For others with strong bonds to their current location, looking for a more private or defensible property while remaining in the same region will be best. Your odds of success are best with a realistic vision that fits your unique situation.

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everyone*

Consider what your family members need and value, and factor those desires into your decision-making. Your teenagers might have a hard time living an hour's drive from school or friends, and your spouse may draw the line at giving up indoor plumbing. On the other hand, new opportunities for a more relaxed lifestyle or outdoor recreation may convince otherwise skeptical family members. It's a good time for in-depth conversations on your shared values, priorities, and plans in light of current circumstances and world changes.

Once you have a target in mind, take a road trip to visit friends or family in a potential destination region. See it yourself, not just online. Many details of the local area and culture are hard to grasp until you see them yourself.

Reality Check

Any venture begins with a learning period with little visible return. This is especially true of relocation as you adjust and get established in your new home. Don't overestimate what you can accomplish in the first 12 months, and be prepared for practical, personal, and financial setbacks.



Even if you feel a great sense of urgency to get more independent, don't jeopardize your well-being by taking on too much at once.

This is especially true if you are new to homesteading or off-grid living. Don't place any big bets on successfully making all your own electricity, raising all your own food, or cutting all your own wood, all in the first year.

Finances

Relocation will require you to have your financial situation in order. If you are not already tracking your income and expenses, get started with a budget now. Determine your current net worth or debt, and take stock of your available funds or home equity. Start a conversation with your local real estate broker about what you could net from selling your current home. Contact a broker and lender in your new destination to determine an attainable purchase budget, and make plans accordingly.

It is better to be conservative here—the best-stocked retreat won't protect you from foreclosure. If you will be changing jobs or relocating to a lower-wage region, be sure to account for the change in income. This task may be sobering, but hard numbers will help you make a good decision in your property search.

Long Term Outlook

Your relocation planning should go beyond short-term avoidance strategies and provide the opportunity for long-term security and flourishing for your family.

In the short term, much of survival comes down to training and stocking up. Surviving any major event will depend on your mindset, skills, and what you have in your closet and pantry. Follow the traditional survivalist motto: Beans, Bullets, and Band-Aids. That is to say, equip yourself with the means to feed, protect, and care for your family.

Survival in the scope of years or generations depends on productivity

Survival in the scope of years or generations depends on productivity. Stored supplies will help meet your needs for months or years, but you must also think about living in the “post-event” world. An effective plan will allow for continued productivity in both good and bad times.

In any major cultural shift, the continued ability to produce an increase is the dividing line between living and dying. Preparation can help you make ends meet in a crisis, but in the scope of years, your net worth and real wealth are either increasing or decreasing. If you aren’t in the black in real terms, you are on the slow road to poverty.

At a minimum level of productivity, you are immediately consuming everything produced. Although the external appearance is different, the subsistence farmer and the paycheck-to-paycheck employee are in the same situation. It appears sustainable until Murphy’s Law comes into play, and there’s no margin when the roof starts leaking.

Consider that thirty-two percent of families in the United States missed mortgage payments in July 2020 due to the economic effects of the coronavirus epidemic. Car loans, mortgages, and credit card payments don't stop being due, and many families are, in reality, only a few paychecks away from harsh realities.

Get out of living paycheck to paycheck--then start planning for future expenses and contingencies. From this base, start working to make your property and lifestyle as productive and resilient as possible.

Consider which businesses will flourish during bad times. This may mean learning a new trade, starting a home business, or changing careers. Ideally, a home-based business should be virtually recession or possibly even depression-proof.



CONCLUSION

Relocation is a valuable tool, but it is only one tool. As Idaho pastor Doug Wilson [commented](#) in 2020

“Take care that you don’t view the place where you are going as some sort of utopia. People are going to be doing the human thing there also, and arrival in such a place is not going to solve all your problems for you. ... Wherever you move, you ought to think of it as a place of opportunity, and not as a place of solutions.”

However your plans for relocation develop, don’t lose sight of the present steps you can take to improve your family’s resiliency. Even in the suburbs or in an apartment, you can find ways to become more prepared and self-reliant. Start with your faith, mindset, and skills, and work outward from there. Build a strong community, live your values faithfully, and pass them on to your children. Put in the work with careful planning, strategy, and preparation.

Contrary to the prophets of doom for America and modern civilization, we can take meaningful steps to build a brighter future for our families. I hope that this guide will be one small piece in helping accomplish that. And even amid collapse and disorder, I trust that we will see countless communities thriving as bastions of faith and liberty.

More Resources:

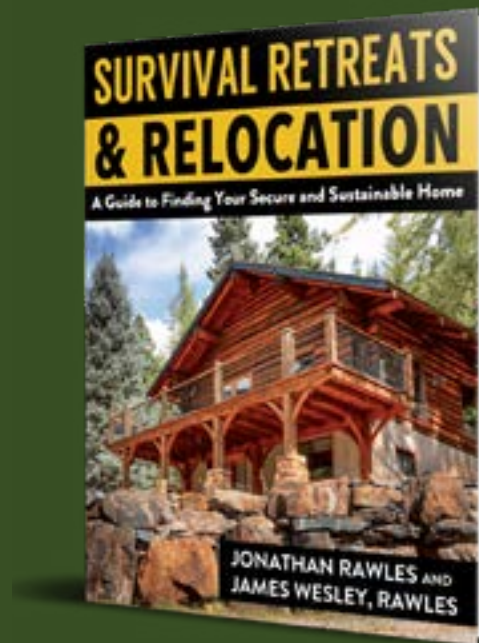
- www.SurvivalRealty.com
- www.SurvivalBlog.com
- [Survival Retreats & Relocation](#) by Jonathan Rawles and James Wesley, Rawles
- [Strategic Relocation](#) by Joel Skousen
- [The American Redoubt — Move to the Mountain States](#)



THE AUTHOR

As co-founder of SurvivalRealty.com in 2007, Jonathan Rawles has helped hundreds of buyers and sellers of rural properties make successful relocations.

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